

A WILD WOMAN'S STORY.

On a low chair in a cell in the jail at Honesdale, Pa., July 10th, 1876, sat a most singular looking person. A round, wrinkled, sun-burned face, small head crowned with thick, shaggy gray hair, that fell down over and almost concealed the blackest and sharpest of eyes; a slender body, clothed in scant and shabby female garb, and lower limbs encased in tattered trousers. This was the occupant of the cell—Lucy Ann Lobdell, *nee* Slater, better known thereabouts as "the female hunter of Long Eddy."

About forty-five years ago a family named Lobdell lived in Delaware county, N. Y., at what is now the village of Long Eddy on the Delaware river and Erie railway, then sparsely settled. Lumbering was the main business of the settlers of the vicinity. The Lobdells dwelt in a cabin in the woods, where a daughter, the subject of our sketch, was born. From the time this child was old enough to walk she was a great favorite among the hardy woodchoppers and raftsmen. They often took her off to the logging camp and kept her there for days at a time, and she early became inured to the hardships of their life. The lumbermen in those days were all good hunters, and always carried their rifles with them. Before Lucy Ann was 8 years old they had taught her the use of the rifle, and she soon became as good a shot as there was in the settlement. At the age of 12 she could out-shoot any of the men, and handled the ax with the ease of an old chopper. Before she had reached the age of 16 she had killed numerous deer, and an absence of two or three days alone in the woods was for her not an uncommon thing. She once killed a full sized panther, and the hide of the animal is now in the possession of an ex-Sheriff of Wayne county, Pennsylvania. Notwithstanding her masculine tastes, Lucy Ann's name, as a girl and woman, was free from reproach. The breath of slander never reached her, and she could have had her choice of a husband from the most exemplary young men in the vicinity. But she had no inclinations to marry, and she rejected all offers.

A raftsman named Harry Slater came into the settlement about 1850. He formed the acquaintance of Lucy Ann, and to the surprise of everybody they were married. Slater had proposed to Lucy Ann, and she told him that they would shoot at a mark with rifles, and if he beat her shots she would marry him, if not she would remain with her parents. The trial of skill took place and Slater was victorious.

Slater proved a worthless scapegrace, and neglected and abused his wife. A year after they were married Mrs. Slater gave birth to a daughter. Before the child was two weeks old Slater deserted both wife and child, leaving them in destitute circumstances. Slater never returned, but was occasionally heard of in New York city, and on the Hudson river, a worthless, drunken vagabond.

The sorrowing wife went back to her parents, and after two years spent in efforts to get along and maintain herself respectably by doing woman's work, but with poor success, she laid aside the apparel of her sex, donned men's clothing, and taking her rifle, went into the woods to earn a living for herself and child.

For eight or ten years she roamed the forests of Sullivan and Delaware counties, in New York, and Wayne and Pike, in Pennsylvania, and spent two years in Meeker county, Minnesota.

She had cabins in various places, and would visit the old home about once a year, and only appeared in the settlements and villages to sell her game and furs and to procure ammunition.

On one of her visits to her child, when it was about four years old, her parents complained of having its care on their hands. She, therefore, took it away, and placed it in the Delhi poor house, and left her old camping ground for New York and thence up the Hudson river—still in men's apparel—and, strange to say, passed and repassed her husband on the Hudson River Railroad without being recognized by him, her disguise was so complete.

From Albany she passed west over the Central New York, and finally turned up in Minnesota, and says she taught three singing schools on the way, to provide means of transportation.

She had a \$75 rifle, and spent her first winter (1855-6) with another person, both in male attire, on the old Kandiyohi town-site, on the north of the Kandiyohi lakes.

They two were employed to reside on and thus hold possession of the new town site, by the Minneapolis proprietors. Her companion spent the winter with her, but never for a moment suspected that he was wintering with a woman.

At times when provisions fell short, they were compelled to live on squirrels for their meat.

In the summer of 1857 she appeared in Maunah, boarding a short time in a place, doing chores, chopping wood, hunting, washing dishes, etc., for her board. She was homely at anything, and those with whom she was acquainted seemed to enjoy her company—her male apparel often requiring her to sleep in close proximity with others of the male gender—but with no indiscretions and with no suspicions that she was other than what appeared on the surface.

She ever seemed well pleased with her disguise, and the difficulty that would naturally interpose in resuming, without loss of character, her natural and appropriate raiment, probably induced her to continue the deception. She claimed to have assumed this disguise originally, in order to better get away from home without detection from a drunken husband.

She had but little money; was a splendid hunter, and was offensive to none, and as before remarked, was good company, and a "bale fellow well met" with all the young people in the neighborhood, committing no indiscretions.

In the summer of 1858, by pure accident, "Satan, with the aid of original sin," discovered and exposed her sex. The blue code of Connecticut was consulted and the law was invoked to purge the community of the scandal.

The county attorney, Wm. Richards, now of the city of New York, filed an information against Mrs. Slater before John Robson, Esq., J. P., then contesting the jurisdiction of this county with J. B. Atkinson, Esq., as Judge of the only court we had, alleging "that, whereas, one Lobdell, alleging 'that, whereas, one Lobdell, to the great scandal of the community, and against the peace and dignity of the State of Minnesota,' and asked that she be dealt with according to law, that so

pernicious an example might not be repeated in this land of steady habits, U. S. Willie, a young lawyer from Virginia, then residing at Forest City, appeared for the prisoner, and A. C. Smith as counsel.

The plea of not guilty was interposed, and the legal evidence to prove the necessary fact could not easily be obtained and was left in doubt, and the court, after taking the case under advisement, finally ruled that the right of females to wear the pants had been recognized from the time of Justinian, and that the doctrine was too well settled to be upset in the case at bar, and Mrs. Slater was therefore discharged.

This denouncement had the effect to discredit her in the settlement, subjecting her to insult from the vicious on every hand. She became deranged pending the proceedings, and, as it were, an outcast in society—an object of commiseration and sympathy, and soon thereafter a public charge.

On recovering from the mental shock, she expressed a willingness to return to her family and friends, but had no means save her rifle, and nobody in the settlement was able to purchase that.

Mrs. Slater was finally sent home at the expense of Meeker county, under the direction of Captain A. D. Pierce, then of Maunah.

Soon thereafter Captain Pierce received a letter from Mrs. Slater's parents, thanking him and the county most heartily for their kindness in returning her to her friends.

In 1859 she again appeared on her old stamping ground, "the basket," and still in female attire.

She would at times recount her experience in the forest, and asserted that in the eight years she had killed one hundred and fifty deer, eleven bears, and numerous wildcats and foxes, besides trapping hundreds of mink and other fur-bearing animals. She had hand to hand contests with both wounded deer and bear, as ugly scars and scars upon her body amply testified. For two or three years after her return she led a mendicant sort of life through the valley, and finally entered the poorhouse at Delhi, to which she had sent her child several years previously. This child, however, had some time before been taken out of the institution by a farmer of Damascus township, Wayne county, Pennsylvania, named David Fortman, and given a home at his house.

In the spring of 1865 a young woman was let off an Erie railway passenger train at Basket station, or Long Eddy. She could not pay her fare any further, and said she had no particular point to which she was going. She gave her name as Mrs. Wilson, and said she had been deserted by her husband at Jersey City, where she had been living for some months. He was an employe of the Erie Railway Company, and had eloped with the daughter of the lady with whom they boarded. Mrs. Wilson said that she was the daughter of highly respectable parents named Perry, of Lynn, Mass., and that she had run away from home and married James Wilson, her parents having opposed the match. The station agent and others at Basket station kindly offered to make up a purse for the unfortunate woman, and send her back to her parents, but she declined the offer, saying she was ashamed to meet them, and did not wish them to know of her whereabouts. She was in feeble health, and fearing that she might become a burden on strangers, she went to Delhi and entered the poor house.

Lucy Ann Slater was still an inmate of the almshouse, and a singular attachment sprang up between her and the newcomer, Mrs. Wilson, probably owing to the similarity of the causes which had forced them to become paupers. The following year both of them left the county house, and nothing was heard of either of them for two years.

In the summer of 1868 a party of fishermen discovered two strange persons living in a cave in Barrett township, Monroe county, Pa. They were a man and a woman. Soon there appeared in one of the villages a tall, gaunt man, carrying a rifle and leading a half-grown bear cub by a string tied about his neck. The man was bear-headed, and his clothing was torn and dirty. Accompanying him was a woman about 25 years of age, shabbily dressed, but giving evidence of more intelligence than the man, who called himself the Rev. Joseph Lobdell, and said that the woman was his wife. As they walked about the man delivered noisy and meaningless "sermons," declaring that he was a prophet of the new dispensation, and that the bear had been sent him by the Lord to guard him in the wilderness. For two years these vagrants wandered about that portion of the country, living in caves and subsisting on roots, berries, and game killed by the man. At last they were arrested and lodged in jail at Stroudsburg, where they were kept several weeks. While in jail the discovery was made that they belonged to Delaware county, New York, and thither they were sent. This pretended man and wife were Lucy Ann Slater and Mrs. Wilson, who had been leading this vagabond life for four years.

In the meantime Mary Ann Slater, the daughter of Lucy Ann, who had been taken from the Delhi almshouse in 1859 or 1860, had found an excellent home, and had grown up to be an intelligent and attractive young woman. A young man named Stone lived near by with his widowed mother, whom he supported. He loved Mary Ann, and being a worthy and promising youth, the foster father of the girl saw no reason to oppose a match between her and the widow's son.

The widow, however, was so strongly set against the son marrying the young lady that the whole neighborhood wondered. A number of young men in the neighborhood were jealous of Stone, and one dark night they waylaid Mary Ann. The outrage drove her almost insane, but Stone's affection was undiminished. He still pressed his claim for her hand. At length, when their marriage seemed certain, Mrs. Stone revealed a state of affairs which fully accounted for her opposition. She told her son that she was not a widow, and that Henry Slater was his father as well as the father of Mary Ann.

Lucy Ann Slater and Mrs. Wilson again left the Delhi poorhouse, and have ever since been living in caves and cabins in the woods. The former is at times entirely deranged. All last winter they lived in a cave ten miles from Honesdale, but they divide their time between Monroe county and this. Lucy Ann wandered into the village the other day, and out of common decency she was arrested.

PIANOETTES as the latest musical novelty.